

Committee: United Nations General Assembly



Delegation: Chile

Topic: Protection of Persons Displaced Due to the Adverse Effects of Climate Change

The Republic of Chile views the growing issue of people displaced by climate change as something that directly concerns our country and our region. Chile is often called a land of contrasts, but in recent years this has also meant contrasts in climate impacts. In the north, the “mega-drought” has lasted for more than 13 years, making it one of the longest in our recorded history¹. Central Chile has faced extremely destructive wildfire seasons, in 2017 more than 500,000 hectares were burned and thousands of people were displaced from their homes². And in the south, Patagonian glaciers continue to retreat at alarming rates, with some losing over a meter of ice thickness per year³. Because of these realities, Chile sees climate-induced displacement not as a distant or hypothetical concept, but as something already affecting parts of our territory, especially vulnerable rural and indigenous communities.

Chile recognizes that the current international legal framework does not adequately address climate-induced displacement. The 1951 Refugee Convention, for example, was never designed to cover people forced to move because of environmental stress or slow-onset climate impacts⁴. As a country that consistently supports multilateralism, Chile believes that the international community has a collective responsibility to begin closing this protection gap. For years, we have pushed for human rights to be at the center of climate discussions, and the protection of displaced persons is naturally part of this approach.

At the national level, Chile has been trying to strengthen its resilience. The National Adaptation Plan, along with sector-specific adaptation strategies, focuses on water resources, infrastructure, biodiversity, and urban planning, all areas directly linked to preventing forced displacement. The government has repeatedly activated the Water Scarcity Decree in over 50 municipalities during the last decade⁵, reflecting how serious water stress has become. After the extreme wildfires of

¹ Centro de Ciencia del Clima y la Resiliencia (CR2). (2020). *La megasequía 2010–2020: Una lección para el futuro*. Universidad de Chile. <https://www.cr2.cl/megasequia/>

² OCHA. (2017). *Chile: Wildfires – Situation Report No. 5*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. <https://reliefweb.int/report/chile/chile-wildfires-situation-report-no-5-28-january-2017>

³ World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS). (2023). *Global Glacier Change Bulletin No. 5 (2020–2021)*. University of Zurich. https://wgms.ch/products_ref_glaciers/

⁴ UNHCR. (2020). *Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/legal-considerations-climate-change-disasters>

⁵ Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Dirección General de Aguas. (s.f.). *Decretos de Escasez Hídrica*. Gobierno de Chile. <https://www.dga.cl>

2017 and again the destructive 2023 season, Chile updated its wildfire management strategies and early-warning systems, recognizing that rapid-onset disasters can push entire communities into temporary or permanent relocation⁶. National leaders have stressed repeatedly, including in our updated Paris Agreement commitments⁷, that climate change is a social challenge as much as an environmental one, and that protecting communities must remain a priority.

Several figures explain why Chile pays close attention to this topic. More than half of our territory has been affected by severe or extreme drought conditions in recent years⁸. Over multiple wildfire seasons in the past decade, SENAPRED (formerly ONEMI) has issued *Sistema de Alerta de Emergencia* (SAE) evacuation alerts, sometimes coordinating the relocation of entire populated areas⁹. And the retreat of Patagonian glaciers, documented by multiple scientific programs, could affect long-term water availability in the south¹⁰.

Internationally, Chile participates in and supports mechanisms that directly relate to climate displacement, including the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Platform on Disaster Displacement. Through these commitments, Chile advocates for stronger regional cooperation in Latin America, since we share many of the same vulnerabilities and could benefit from coordinated responses. Chile believes that addressing climate displacement cannot rely only on emergency reactions; long-term planning, better data, and clear shared responsibilities are essential.

In this session of the General Assembly, Chile would like to contribute to a resolution that is practical, realistic, and forward-looking. We support establishing clearer international guidelines on protecting climate-displaced persons, strengthening early-warning systems, and improving access to funding for countries that must manage internal or cross-border climate mobility. Chile is also open to discussions on updating or expanding legal interpretations, or in the future even legal instruments, to better address climate-induced movement while respecting each State's sovereignty and context. Finally, Chile intends to collaborate closely with our Latin American neighbors and with countries already facing severe climate mobility, such as small island developing States. Our goal is to help shape a resolution that is grounded in dignity, responsibility, and cooperation. Climate displacement is increasing every year, delaying action will only make solutions harder for everyone.

⁶ Centro de Ciencia del Clima y la Resiliencia (CR2). (s.d.). *The significance of extreme weather conditions in mega-fires in south-central Chile*. CR2.

<https://www.cr2.cl/eng/the-significance-of-extreme-weather-conditions-in-mega-fires-in-south-central-chile/>

⁷ Ministerio del Medio Ambiente de Chile. (2020). *Contribución Determinada a Nivel Nacional (NDC): Actualización 2020*. Gobierno de Chile. <https://ndc.mma.gob.cl/>

⁸ Centro de Ciencia del Clima y la Resiliencia (CR2). (2020). *La megasequía 2010–2020: Una lección para el futuro*. Universidad de Chile. <https://www.cr2.cl/megasequia/>

⁹ Servicio Nacional de Prevención y Respuesta ante Desastres (SENAPRED). (2025). *Resumen nacional de incendios forestales*. SENAPRED. <https://web.senapred.cl/resumen-nacional-de-incendios-forestales/>

¹⁰ World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS). (2023). *Global Glacier Change Bulletin No. 5 (2020–2021)*. University of Zurich. https://wgms.ch/products_ref_glaciers/